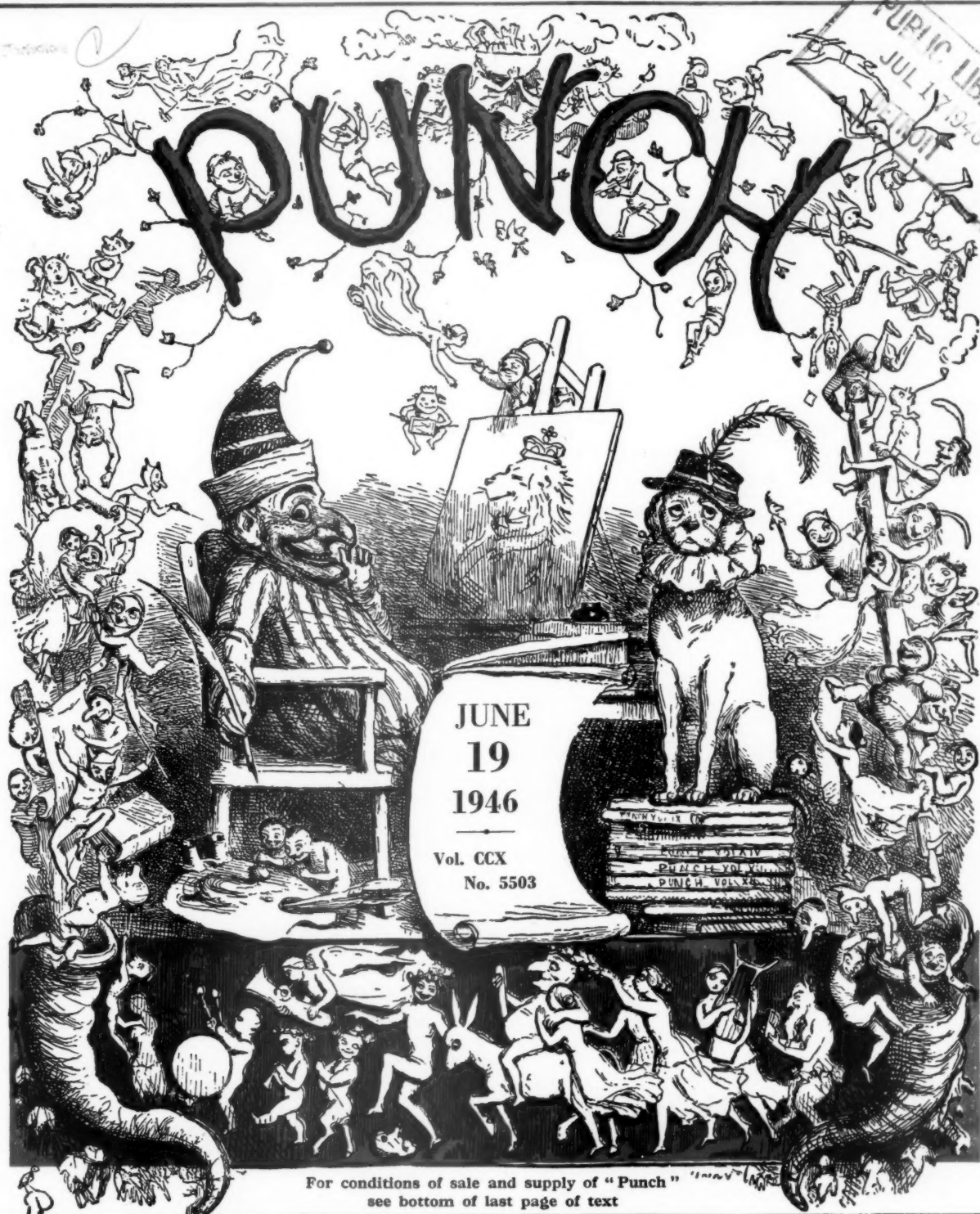


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For conditions of sale and supply of "Punch"
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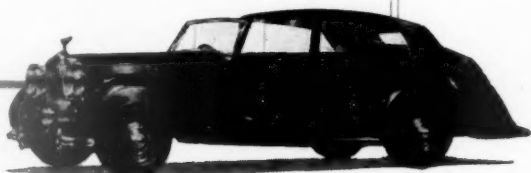
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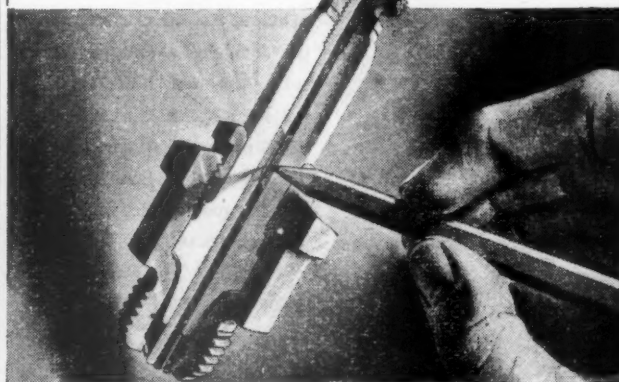
It certainly is necessary for most people to take a good holiday this year and the railways will do their utmost to provide a comfortable journey for all who decide to travel.

New rolling stock is being built as quickly as possible, but there cannot yet be enough seats to go round at the week-ends, especially in July and August.

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P.28



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P.2

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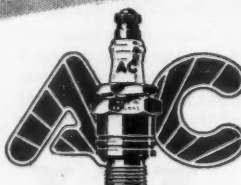
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both feet ensures a better fit and longer wear.

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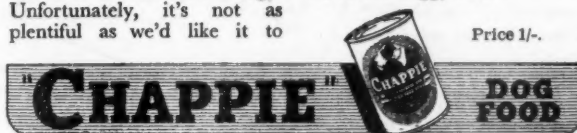
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PUNCH

Or

The London Charivari



Vol. CCX No. 5503

June 19 1946

Charivaria

BOOKMAKERS complain that they lost £50,000 on a single day's racing recently. Backers have a good idea who will have to find it.

A woman engineer told a Llandudno audience she was glad to leave the bench for cooking again. The title of her address was, of course, "From Nuts to Soup."



More and more reclaimed land in various parts of the country is being used for growing food. We understand that the Great Missenden car-park is shortly to be put under cultivation.

There is a possibility that one day a woman will be Lord Mayor of London. Search is already being made for nylons to cover her coachwoman's calves.

"There's at least one man in England who does not believe in disarmament—and that is Mr. Cecil G. Vokes, an aircraft part manufacturer whose hobby is collecting old forearms."

Right or left?

Middle-East paper.

A circus dwarf charged with taking an electric lamp from a street standard was bound over. The Bench probably took the view that somebody must have put him up to it.

"England's scenic beauties await the holiday-maker of 1946," says a writer. Don't miss this chance. By next year the hoardings may be up again.

We gather that conditions have been so chaotic in some parts of Germany since the end of the war that they're beginning to think they won it.



One London night-club is, we are told, in a cellar. The commissionaire ejects unwanted guests through a revolving manhole-cover.

A table-tennis cocktail party with music was recently given in London. At a later stage some of the guests played quoits with the rings left on the piano.

The Cosmic Queue

"THE OUTER WORLD"

has been held over this morning because of pressure on space.
Announcement in "Daily Mail."

Even the purest-looking air has rubbish suspended in it, says a doctor. This is no secret to wireless fans.

Atomic bomb experts now tell us that nothing as small as a golf-ball could possibly cause devastation over wide areas. Though caddies could tell them differently.

We read that an American company is experimenting with new super-fast seaplanes. They float on and jetsam.

A dramatic critic mentions that all the food on the table in a new play is eatable. Is it too much to hope that restaurants will copy the idea?

Holiday Note

"At Woodford people were pouring out of trolley-buses into Epping Forest, looking green and lovely."
"Evening Standard."

Attention is being given to a French specialist's theory that head pains can be soothed by the employment of certain musical sounds. The effect of a dentist's door-bell on toothache is already well known.

Cricket Trial

Wednesday.

The morning papers said the outfield was more or less a swamp. There was a likelihood, they added, that the start would be delayed.

The midday papers said the probability was that there would be no play before lunch. The ground was still very wet.

At two-thirty the papers said there had been no play before lunch. This, they explained, was on account of the state of the outfield, which was soaking. The chances of a ball being bowled before tea-time were extremely slight; and indeed, in the absence of a quick-drying sun, there was little hope of any play that day.

By three o'clock the rain clouds which had been lowering all day had concentrated their forces and dropped another hundred feet—perhaps to have a look at the outfield. Finding it wet enough they forbore to precipitate themselves.

In these circumstances only a man of exceptional folly would go to Lord's at half-past three. But it was pleasant, as I made my way from St. John's Wood station, to find myself in the company of some two or three hundred others equally unbalanced. And it was positively exhilarating to come upon a multitude perhaps ten times that number already in position outside the gates. Some leant in a kind of straggling queue against the wall, others stood in knots and whorls about the roadway. All were immobile, withdrawn, their heads hanging down like cattle at milking-time. None were lying down—a sure sign, they say, of rain.

The newcomer in such a gathering feels shy and awkward at first. He has a right to be there, but like a new boy at a public school he hasn't proved it. He has yet to win his spurs. And his ignorance weighs on him like a cloud. He would dearly like to know what is happening, but he cannot bring himself to push his way through all that mass of people to find out. And supposing he did? Supposing he forced his way right up to some turnstile and happened to find some official there to speak to, what question could he ask that would not seem otiose and ridiculous in the presence of such a cloud of witnesses? It seemed to me, none.

But I still wanted to know. So after twenty minutes, when I felt more at home and one of them, I asked a man in a mackintosh what the position was. All the men had mackintoshes of course, but this was the only one I spoke to.

He didn't know. "They put a board up this morning," he said, "No play before lunch," but I haven't heard anything since then."

"What time was this?" I asked.

"Ten to four," he said, consulting his watch.

"I meant," I explained, "what time did they put the board up?"

"Lunch-time," he said. "They ought to tell us what's happening."

"It's the M.C.C.," I said. "They won't speak to you unless you've had your name down since before you were born."

"Down where?" he asked.

"I don't know," I said. "In a book."

"Sounds loopy to me," he said; and there we left it.

Waiting about outside a ground for play to start is very much worse than waiting about inside for, as we say, "the resumption." When you are inside there is plenty to keep you on the alert. The two captains may appear at the pavilion door, look up at the sky and go in again.

Or a bedraggled figure in a raincoat is seen momentarily on the balcony and some exceptionally knowledgeable watcher will say "That's Hardstaff." From time to time a cry, "The umpires are coming out," rings round the ground. It is unfounded, but it helps. Outside the ground there is nothing. Nothing to look at, nothing to say, nothing to do except wait dumbly and patiently for the moment when we can all go home.

I was near enough to a turnstile, when that moment came, to see the manner in which the *ukase* was delivered. A man of sorts strolled up to the bars, made a sweeping movement of dismissal with the palm of his hand, said "No play to-day," and turned away. His manner was exactly that of a man who never buys at the door. Now I don't want to be hard on the M.C.C., who have their problems no doubt like the rest of us and can't get linseed oil for their bats and so on, but this is no way to treat a crowd of potential half-crowns who have stood there for hours—and some of them, like my indomitable man in the mackintosh, all day—to see an ever-diminishing bit of cricket. I don't mean we shan't come again to-morrow. We shall. We come to see cricket, not to check up on the M.C.C.'s manners. But it would be nice if someone with a megaphone would pop up on top of the wall from time to time during the long hours of waiting and tell us how things were going over on the other side. We should like to hear, for instance, that Hammond had made a good lunch. And it would be nicer still if at the end they would say how sorry they were we had all been disappointed, but there it was and we must all hope for better luck to-morrow.

They might even explain that the reason there would be no play that day was the state of the outfield. Then we should all know we had been right all along in supposing it was soaking.

Thursday.

It was a bright sunny morning, so I made special arrangements to get an hour at Lord's before lunch. A bit of huck with the toss, I argued, followed by two quick wickets and Hammond might be in.

When I got there, at 12.15, the same old crowd were leaning against the wall. They had shaved, most of them, since the previous evening and their mackintoshes were hanging on their arms, but apart from that you would have said not one of them had moved.

I felt less shy on this occasion, and I went straight up to a shortish man, rather of Hendren's build, and said:

"What the ——— is going on here?"

"Nothing," he said. "They're inspecting the wicket at two."

"Not much use, is it," I said bitterly, "to a man who's only got an hour to spare in the morning?"

"That's right," he said—the fool.

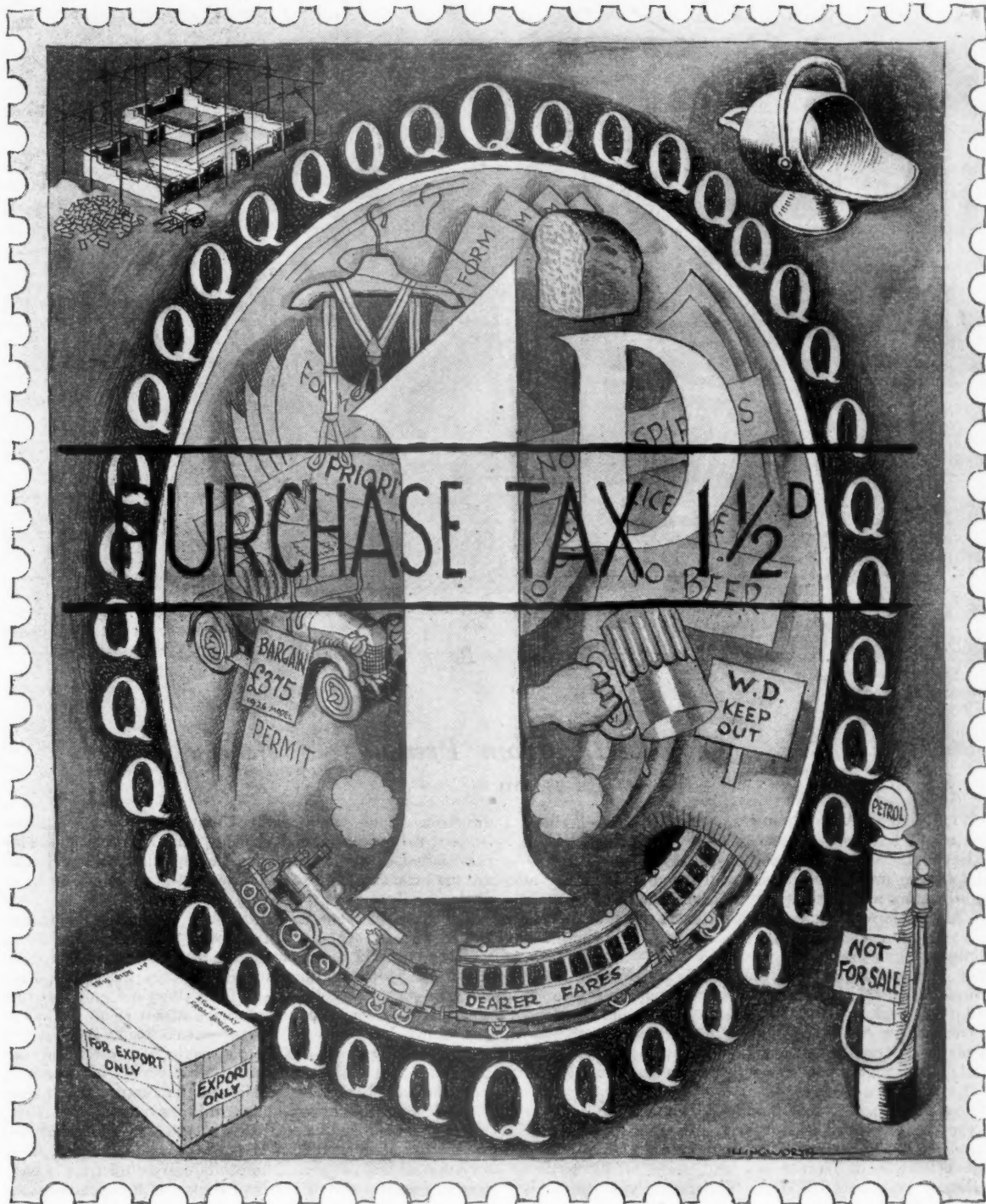
As for the M.C.C., I am going to put my grandson down, if I can manage it. It seems to me the outfield may be dry by the time he is born.

Friday.

The outfield was dry, they say, by three o'clock yesterday, and the man Brookes (Northants) made sixty-six in some three and a half hours. It would be interesting, in these circumstances, to know by what time the Tavern was dry, but the M.C.C., with their customary incivility, are dumb.

I am going this afternoon to check up.

H. F. E.



REJECTED DESIGN



"... and then I want you to go to the Pacific and cover the atom bomb."

Letter from Prague

III

I WISH I had lived in Prague as a child. Then perhaps I might have got trams out of my system. I might have passed on to become an inspector of trams, perhaps even one of those men who stand majestically at termini saying when trams may depart. At least I should have known how to drive a tram, for in Prague anyone can stand alongside the driver and pick up the basic technique.

Not only stand alongside him. You can breathe down his neck, tread on his feet, press your attaché case into the small of his back, push his hat sideways, snip buttons from the back of his coat—the fact is that for most of the day in Prague the trams are so crowded that once you do find a niche into which you can wriggle no one can possibly get at you to turn you out of it.

There are four ways of moving about Prague. If you are very well supplied with cigarettes you may find a taxi. If you are an important Party or Government official—or an employee of Unrra—you will undoubtedly have a vehicle at your sole disposal. Otherwise, you can walk or use a tram. Trams are more pleasant when it is raining.

They are attractive to look at, single-storied affairs, dignified and patient, not to be hurried, never at a loss to find a set of points to start them off in a totally unexpected

direction. They are usually followed by two or three trailers, rather more aged vehicles, like poor relations who have failed to make their own way in the world and who are for ever condemned to follow in the wake of the head of the family.

The tram in front is called the "Motorak," the trailer the "Vlecnak." Many of the newer motoraks have doors which open and shut pneumatically and when the door closes the steps at the entrance silently disappear, thus rendering admission to or exit from them quite impossible. There is a touch of the totalitarian about them, and they are known locally as "U-boats"—once inside there is not the faintest hope of getting out again before the captain permits. The trailers are called "Krassins," in honour of the renowned Soviet ice-breaker of that name, which they strongly resemble in shape and impressiveness.

Each vehicle in the set has a conductor, and each conductor has his own bell, so that the driver, in theory, must wait for all bells to sound before he moves off from a halt. But in practice the driver is of the same independent cast of mind as the London bus-driver. He has his own views on how long it should take the crowd at the stop to mount. If they are slow, well, that is just too bad. They can try again with the next tram.

There seems to be one fare for all distances, and it is

advisable to carry the coin for the exact fare in the mouth and to keep one hand wound round the head, otherwise, in the rush hours, that is, between 6 A.M. and 11 P.M., there will be no possibility of paying at all, for (a) you will not be able to get your hand either into or out of a pocket, (b) if you wish for change the conductor will not be able to get any from his satchel, or (c)—even more likely—the crowd will sweep away both money and ticket during the act of transfer from conductor to you. If that happens, write the money off as a loss at once. It is said that quite frequently at night, when the tram is brushed out in the depot, bodies are found on the floor, clutching the pathetic coins for which they stooped down to search so inadvisedly on their way to work.

But let us go back to driving a tram. I used to think that driving a tram must be a complex matter. Each hand had to manage a separate instrument, the brass handle in the left hand, the right resting negligently on the black iron wheel which seems to be connected with the brake. Each wheel revolved in a different direction. I felt that the whole operation should be regarded as only slightly lower than the playing of classical piano music. But really, when you come to look into it, and that from the vantage point of the driver's left ear, you can see that it is all comparatively simple. It is the brass handle that does all the work.

The handle moves past thirteen notches, seven of which influence the forward movement, the remainder being concerned with what I remember was called negative acceleration. You are, let us suppose, at rest. You move the brass handle one notch. Imperceptibly the tram starts to move forward. It is the signal for the older ladies to finish the act of mounting. Another notch. The forward movement is now appreciable and you get the opening notes of that familiar grinding sound from the wheels. The business men push aside those in front of them and clamber on board. Another notch—girls are now springing lightly up the steps—two more, and athletic young men are fighting among themselves for the last footholds on the rear trailer. The final notch and you are at full speed, impressive enough on the level, practically unlimited downhill.

Stopping is even simpler. One notch back when approaching the halt, to warn all passengers intending to leave there that it is time to stand up and begin to fight towards the platform. Then, at the last minute, swing the handle through the remaining notches, thus causing the tram to stop almost dead. On the rare occasions when the tram is half empty this will cause all standing passengers to fall flat on their faces, but generally the tram will be so full that the complete result of this manoeuvre will be lost. Still, it is nice to have tried.

Without its trams Prague would be an empty sad city, with no life, no movement. Nor are they just unromantic practical things. Overturned trams made the first barricades when Prague rose against the Germans. Trams, too, were used by the Gestapo to take Czech prisoners from prison to the railway station for the concentration camps. The prisoners used to slip notes into the pockets of the driver, and very many last messages have reached the relatives who mourned through the courtesy (and courage) of the Prague Municipal Tramways.

But last week I saw something that I regard as a sad omen. It was a trolley-bus. True, it was well out in the suburbs, but where one trolley-bus is to-day, to-morrow there will be a hundred. There is a kind of Gresham's Law in the relation between trolley-buses and trams. Still, I have seen the trams of Prague at their best, and for that I am grateful.

The Boat

A London Mystery

T WAS, vaguely, some few months ago.
The houses were modest but neat
And stood in a casual row
A little way back from the street.
Expecting no wonder I passed
When I suddenly happened to note
In the garden (so-called) which belonged to the last
A whacking great boat.

A thing of gargantuan build,
No skiff or riparian punt,
It seemed to swell out till it filled
The patch called a garden in front.
Severely fenced in from the road
By a fence that was sturdy and stout.
It was settled for good like a permanent toad
With no getting out.

"Sad, sad," with emotion I cried,
"No longer borne up like a cork
The life-giving wavelets to ride;
Now, static as slow-breathing pork,
Divorced from its natural sea
With not even a river, it lies."
Though I own that a fat lot of good that would be
For a hulk of such size.

This morning while taking the air,
I sought it to ponder thereon.
Yestreen it was certainly there,
And—picture me, friends—it had gone.
Still fenced, it had flown in a night
"Twixt setting and rise of the sun,
And a sea-going craft, as you've gathered, of quite
Or well-nigh a ton.

O you that are given to thought,
Resolve me this thing if you can,
This miracle not to be wrought
By agents familiar to man.
To me, that am lost in amaze,
One thing and one only is clear,
That the work is of fairies, the mischievous fays
Have been at it here.

They came, and the ship in a trice
Was changed to a faerie bark;
They breathed, and a zephyr of spice
Uplifted it light as a lark.
It has soared through the ultimate sky
Unvisioned by mortals below,
And the magical spot where they've put it, and why,
I'm blest if I know. DUM-DUM.

o o

Phew!

"The sigh of the stalwart troops of the Dominions and Colonies, from Africa, from India, from Malta and Mauritius, from every part of the world, all bearing a common allegiance to the same King, was something Londoners will not forget."—*Sunday paper.*

At the Pictures

CRIME

My hopes had been too high: *Bedelia* (Director: LANCE COMFORT) is a great disappointment. After reading the book, and remembering the excellence of the American *Laura* from a book of the same kind by the same author, I unthinkingly looked forward to the British *Bedelia* without allowing for the fact that there was no guarantee of its being done in our rare all-out or first-rate manner. British studios can produce murder thrillers, and very good ones; indeed, I've read American reviews that admit it, complimenting us on our "old, expert way" with this sort of story above all others. It's therefore very unlucky that a good American murder novel, which cried out for the kind of sophisticated treatment given to *Laura*, should for some reason have got a production much of which seemed to me almost as cheerfully amateurish as the run of British pictures in (say) 1935. Who is responsible for this sort of playing down, or rather this refusal to play up? There must be somebody who says, at each doubtful point, "Oh, we musn't make it too subtle or they won't like it in Leeds"—or, more regrettably and even more probably, "We needn't bother about subtlety because there aren't enough people who'd notice it to make any difference at the box-office." So—in go the ham effects, the easy laughs, the clichés of dialogue and situation that please the simpler members of the audience partly because they are familiar.

Such, for instance, as the lady visitor's inquiry "Who's that gorgeous hunk o' man?" which arouses enough squeals of delight to suggest that it's a daring novelty or at least hardly more than fifth-hand...

I suppose if protests of this kind are made often enough some notice may eventually be taken; but in my experience the reaction is "You can't please him—he's got a down on British films." If I had got a down on British films the situation would be much simpler—I shouldn't mind how bad they were.

We see a woman poisoner (MARGARET LOCKWOOD energetically pretending to be wicked), who has already got rid of three husbands for their insurance, foiled in the act of disembarassing herself of a fourth. The scene at first is Monte Carlo (where for no reason at

Yorkshire housekeeper. That seems to be all I have the patience to say apropos of *Bedelia*.

"Detail," a word I admit using too much, is nevertheless the most convenient and expressive for summing-up the department in which the average good American thriller excels. It is the skilful use of detail that makes *The Dark Corner* (Director: HENRY HATHAWAY) worth seeing apart from its interest as a straightforwardly exciting murder story. This is a tale full of familiar characters, headed by the tough private detective and his beautiful secretary; we have seen the same sort of thing often enough, in *Farewell, My Lovely* for instance; fables of this pattern are the staple ingredient of the American pulp magazines and their British imitations. But what admirably absorbing pictures they make when the detail seems authentic and is used imaginatively! The rooms here, for instance, the private rooms in people's homes, look convincing and are lit convincingly; and in every scene the camera is encouraged to pick out the interesting rather than the typical—it may be, the dancers in a night-club milling round to stare in fascination at the hands of the piano-player. Thrills cannot be constant, but interest can: the interest of a designed picture, or an amusing bit of dialogue, or an unusual scene. Plenty of thrills are there too, for the detective is "framed," and it takes him all his time to avoid being executed for murder himself. The new star MARK STEVENS is the hero, and LUCILLE BALL his secretary; CLIFTON WEBB you will spot very soon as the villain, and the invaluable WILLIAM BENDIX does his dirty work. There are many memorable little scenes that will stick in my mind long after the convolutions of the plot have faded. I recall with particular pleasure Mr. BENDIX looking down his nose at a telephone-mouthpiece while a scruffy child annoys him by playing on a whistle; but I enjoyed almost everything in this picture except the brutality, which was no doubt included quite cynically for the people who would enjoy it.

R. M.



[Bedelia]

KITCHEN CRISIS

Mary	BEATRICE VARLEY
Nurse Harris	JILL ESMOND
Charlie Carrington	IAN HUNTER
Bedelia	MARGARET LOCKWOOD

all we get an exhibition dance), but the story has been thoroughly Anglicized and from there it shifts to Yorkshire, no doubt for the sake of the snow—



[The Dark Corner]

BUMPED-OFF GALLERY

The Man in the White Suit	WILLIAM BENDIX
Cathcart	CLIFTON WEBB

which, by the way, smears on a car's windscreen like whitewash. The acting I liked best was a tiny "bit" by LOUISE HAMPTON as Hannah, a

in this picture except the brutality, which was no doubt included quite cynically for the people who would enjoy it.

Pocket Edition

A THRILL of horror ran down my spine the other day as I saw Sympton coming towards me along the promenade at Munton-on-Sea, deep in conversation with a small boy who looked like a pocket edition of himself.

"My nephew, Jeremy Sympton," he said as they came up.

"He is very like you in appearance," I answered, shaking Jeremy by the hand. I felt that the remark was vaguely insulting to the boy, but I uttered it without thinking, and he did not seem to take it amiss.

"It runs in the family," explained Sympton. "All the Symptons have the same faces." He appeared to regard the fact with inexplicable pride.

The idea that somewhere in England there lurked dozens of Symptons, irritating their acquaintances and slowly reducing their friends to bankruptcy, came to me as a great shock. I suppose if I had thought about it I must have known that Sympton had relatives, but hitherto he had kept them dark. Obviously he must have had parents and grandparents, and ancestors right back through history. This, I reflected, no doubt explained why England had so often been in tight corners. No doubt William the Conqueror only won the Battle of Hastings because Churl Sympton was in charge of Harold's ammunition and handed .38 arrows to men with .45 bows. No doubt a Sir Rupert Sympton invented square round-shot for use at Marston Moor, and thus caused the downfall of his master the first Charles. It was easy to imagine Buck Sympton selling huge quantities of worthless shares to his friends just before the bursting of the South Sea Bubble.

I came out of my reverie to find that the elder Sympton had gone.

"He wants us to meet him at the Clock Tower at twelve," said the pocket edition. "I've found a way of playing cricket in a slot machine without losing any pennies. Come along."

He took me to a recently re-erected slot-machine in which thirteen shabby-looking cricketers were willing to play the game after the insertion of two pennies, one of which was returned when the ball sank. Jeremy had found that by holding one of the handles in a certain way, both pennies could be recovered. We had three games without the loss of a penny, and I must admit to a feeling of evil satisfaction. Then, with the fourth game, the trick



"My side's all in favour of changing round in five minutes, if it's okay with yours."

failed to work, and only one penny came back.

This was obviously the time to desist, but neither Jeremy nor I felt inclined to do so. We felt that with perseverance the knack would come back. It did, after we had lost twenty-three more pennies. A great exultation filled us when the next penny came back.

"I've been watching you," said a grim-looking pier attendant. "You've been cheating on that machine, and ten to one you have damaged it contrary to the by-laws. I'll trouble you for your name and address, or you can come along to the entrance and give it to the policeman."

It cost me five shillings to get rid of him, and on the way to the Clock Tower I realized with horror that Jeremy resembled his uncle, not in face

alone, but in his uncanny ability to get his companions into trouble. To make matters worse Sympton was in a furious temper when we met him at the Clock Tower, and he pointed out with acerbity that it was one o'clock.

"I tried to make the man stop playing cricket," said Jeremy. "I told him we'd be late, but he would go on putting pennies in."

Of course I had to apologize and take them to lunch at an hotel, so that my first meeting with the pocket edition cost me just over a pound. Not bad going at eight years old, even for a Sympton.

"Two Damask Tablecloths, one 104 ft. x 99 ft., other 86 ft. x 72 ft."

Advt. in Sunday paper.

Gargantua giving up?



"Does 'Why the — is there no bread on the table?' count as a diner's request?"

Adversities

I THOUGHT that to-day my readers might like to read something about those small occurrences which happen to them no less than to other people—and, to put the matter in perspective, no more than to other people either. I thought also that they might like me to begin with that well-known aspect of adversity known as breaking things, because it is always nicer to read of some adversity that is not happening to us at the moment, and I don't imagine that right at this moment any of my readers can be actually breaking anything.

China being as breakable as any substance known to man except digestive biscuits, it is only reasonable that china should get broken, especially as there are so many ways of doing it—by drying up, by leaning on the mantelpiece, by dusting or by putting down a tray of which the half on the table is not so heavy, though it may be fuller, than the half left in mid-air, or even by what looks to outsiders like picking up an innocent ash-tray and dashing it relentlessly to the floor. It is also possible to break a trayful of china which has already been balanced successfully on the only empty bit of a table; the usual process is to lift off the teapot and realize too late that the tray knew that particular rule as well as we do now. This particular rule has several other domestic applications—you see it at work, for example, when the anchor or ballast of an arm-chair loaded along one arm decides to get up and talk to someone across the room—but it never shows up better than with

a full tray. China-breaking is both a very temporary and a very permanent adversity, because the experience, or realization that it cannot be stopped from hitting the floor passes but the fact remains. Incidentally, if my readers would like some hints on how to mend ornamental china, all I can suggest is that they shouldn't always be too excited by the invisible way two broken bits can be held together with the hands. Nor does it help to tell ourselves passionately that if we had not broken this piece of china we should have spent the rest of our lives lavishing appreciation on it. If Fate, or Nature, or whatever it is in charge of china-breaking, were to take any notice of this sort of thing, scientists say they don't know what the world would be like, except that it would be different.

Moving abruptly to another plane, I want my readers to consider how they felt last time they got caught up in a conversation—perhaps in the street or on their doorstep—from which at the time it seemed impossible they should ever get away; how they found themselves transferring their shopping from side to side or, if on the door-step, transferring their weight from one leg to the door or twiddling the knob or locking back the latch with that slide thing—and how they hoped that any such movement might not appear the hint it was that they wanted to stop talking. Human nature does not on the whole like to be rude—it does not consider itself tough enough to carry it off—and it would think itself very rude, however glad, if anyone stopped talking just because it twiddled a latch or looked distractedly at a passing bus. It prefers to round the conversation off verbally; to move the camera back from the close-up to a broader sweep of the subject. This is a moderately skilled job and involves throwing in chance remarks at the right moment, retracting a little because we are looking obvious, and then suddenly being told that the talker is keeping us and must be off anyway. But this sort of conversation is nothing to another sort which has crept upon us in the last few years—it may have been there before, of course, but it would not have been noticed then except at the time—the conversation that takes place between the shopkeeper and the shopper in front of us. This may last no more than thirty seconds and consist of nothing more than hopes for the future of the weather, but psychologists rate its annoyance-value higher even than not being able to find the matches for the gas-cooker. Matches may be found eventually by looking in what turns out to be the right place, but fellow-shoppers who chat with shopkeepers can be done nothing about, or not with telepathy in its present very tentative stage. I need not, of course, remind my readers that if they happen to be the person the shopkeeper is talking to then everything is different, and they are entitled to the respect from behind the counter and the awed interest to left or right of it.

Before I leave the subject of conversation I should like to mention another aspect of the subject—the difficulties of making conversation to people we have to talk to. My readers are probably old enough to have found that they can talk quite nicely to almost anyone as long as they don't mind not seeming very intelligent, just cheerful and willing and prepared to shelve their theories or opinions for the time being. The difficulty crops up when we are plugging away like this in the hearing of people who know us well. This means assuming a protective layer of something sociologists cannot quite define because they do not consider definition necessary. They say everyone feels the same when overheard making conversation, and that everyone tries to make up for it by looking extra bright, or as if doing it for choice.

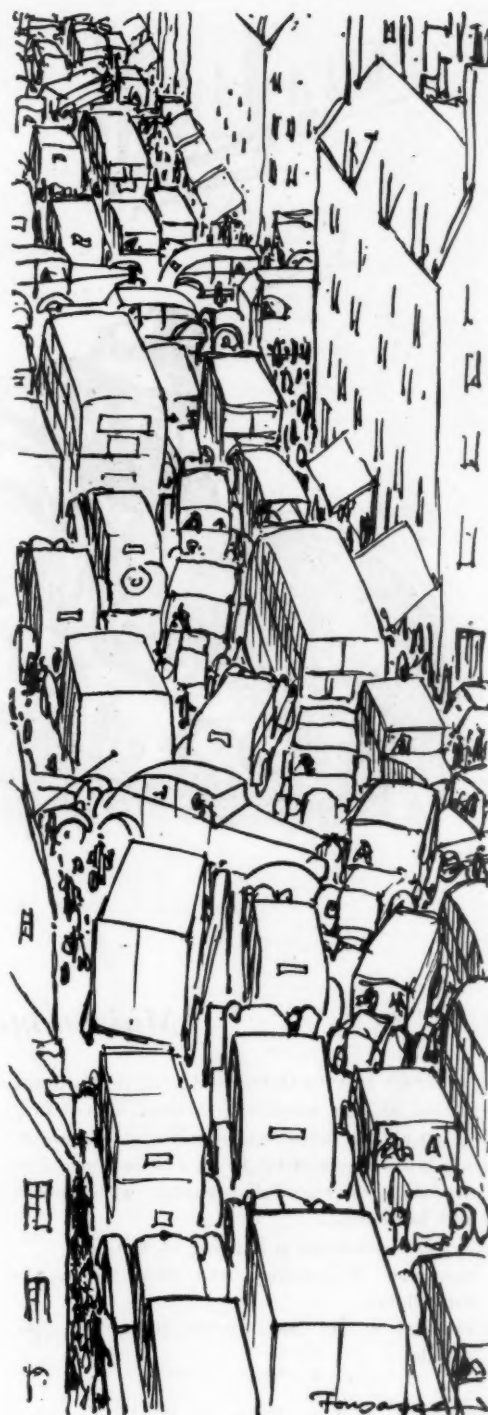
Now I want to say something about getting the marmalade on to the newspaper at breakfast, though all I want to

say is that marmalade is sticky, and when it gets on to a newspaper it makes the newspaper sticky too. This is not the sort of adversity that needs any writing-up, beyond a harsh reminder that if we keep our newspaper out of our marmalade we do not get marmalade on it; though this does not mean that other people will not before they hand the newspaper on to us. Talking of handing on newspapers, I must mention those fine bursts of political intuition, or percipience, or any other fairly long word my readers can think of to describe those awfully momentous comments they throw out at breakfast on what the papers say. I must mention also the extraordinary non-reception they are apt to get. This is because people do not gear themselves up to say anything special at breakfast unless they have something special to say, and it is only the people making these momentous comments who do have something special to say. All this about newspapers has led me away from another breakfast-time adversity—tea or coffee in the saucer. It can happen at tea-time too of course or any time we pour anything out of a tea- or coffee-pot. Scientists say they do not know why tea or coffee poured into a cup, and stopping before it reaches the top, should also get into the saucer, and the people pouring say they don't know either; but there is a strong feeling among the non-pourers that the pourers know more than they will tell, and a suspicion among the pourers that they are not quite so guiltless as they think. None of this anyway alters the fact that tea in a saucer drips off a cup when the cup is lifted, and that no one responsible for the table-cloth being clean has ever got through the first meal off a clean table-cloth without that small pang which denotes that the table-cloth is no longer clean in theory, by which I mean fit for every rank of visitor.

To end up I shall herd together a lot of small adverse occasions and tell my readers how they take them. When my readers get a piece of grit in their eye they feel as awful as they feel fine when it comes out. When a strange dog ceases to look as if it might bite they wish they had not looked as nervous as they probably did. When the weather is bad they have a hard time convincing themselves that grumbling does not help, and even that does not always stop them. And finally I should like to leave my readers with a mildly touching mental picture. It consists of people whose net curtains are rotting (as opposed to just tearing here and there) sitting down opposite these curtains and willing them to join together again. Psychologists say that no one has ever mended any net curtains this way, but that they themselves carry this picture round in their minds as the finest example they know of hope in the face of adversity.

Lines Written in a Modern Garden

MY garden is a concrete thing, God wot,
 Crazy path,
 Toadstool,
 Bird-bath,
 A sterile school
 Of Faery—yet a fool
 Would say that Gnomes are not.
 Not Gnomes! In gardens! By cemented pool
 Fishing with frozen line?
 At any rate one squats by mine.



"The only thing that worries me is the thought that some day someone may get to hear of these traffic jams and stop us using petrol altogether."



"One o' them snoopin' Ministry o' Food inspectors, I'll bet."

Midsummer Day's Dream

IT is pleasant now to think of Winter in his library,
 Sitting by the window in a large arm-chair,
 Reading all the latest works on Polar exploration,
 Jotting down review-notes in an *aide-mémoire*.
 There are maps on the walls, marked with isobars
 and isotherms,
 And a huge barometer is hanging by the door,
 And books on meteorology and new designs for
 snow-flakes
 Are stacked in the book-shelves or strewn upon
 the floor.

It is pleasant now to think of Winter in his
 dining-room,
 Eating crisp lettuces from table-cloth of snow,
 Salads served on glaciers, superbly frozen,
 Morning-gathered strawberries with fresh chilled dew.

He is drinking lime- and lemon-juice from tall frosted
 tumblers

With icebergs afloat in them, clinking on the brim;
 Cream-ice and water-ice, a carnival of colouring,
 Stand on a snowdrift in the corner of the room.

It is pleasant now to think of Winter in his
 sleeping-bag,

Glancing at his watch with illuminated dial,
 Turning over cosily with orders to December
 To bring his breakfast punctually and call him without
 fail.

He is dreaming of the playgrounds he will build among
 the mountains,

Dreaming of the rivers with their dancing-floors of ice,
 Waltzes and quick-steps, mistletoe and holly,
 And a smile plays softly on the cool quiet face.



THE TWO PYRAMI

"O sweet and lovely wall,
Show us thy chink."



"Only some conscience-money for the exchequer, O King. The party wishes to remain anonymous."

Racing Notes

(By Captain Haddock)

IOWN to some disquiet concerning the state of my profession. It would perhaps be an overstatement to describe the prediction of horse-movements as an exact science. No more than the weather-prophet do we undertake to be right every time. The comparison, however, does nothing to diminish my concern. For a failure to foretell the weather correctly will not, in these days, be the cause of great financial loss, except, at certain seasons, to farmers and others, whose losses have always been philosophically regarded by the rest of mankind. But the sums invested daily in the movements of race-horses are vast and increasing, and a failure here may affect every class, almost every family, in the community. There is something to be said, then, for the view that in this field a higher standard of accuracy may be desired, and even demanded. Is such a standard, in fact, maintained?

Take the recent renewal of the Derby Stakes. It is now generally

known that the first three horses to finish the course were:

1. Airborne
2. Gulf Stream
3. Radiotherapy

Now, I have read many of the careful pieces of prose in which, on the morning of the race, my colleagues discussed and weighed the chances of the seventeen animals engaged. The — selected Khaled, with Radiotherapy "the next best". The — gave Khaled, Fast and Fair, and Gulf Stream. The — gave Khaled (nap) and Radiotherapy. The — gave Khaled, Fast and Fair, and Neapolitan. Another paper gave (in one column) Khaled, Fast and Fair, and Radiotherapy: and (in another) Fast and Fair, Khaled and Edward Tudor. The only Sunday paper I have before me gave Khaled.

Two or three points of interest must at once be noted.

The horse Khaled, in whom so many

experts put their faith, for reasons carefully and frankly stated, was "beaten" at the entrance to the straight.

None of the wise and widely-read men I have quoted predicted that the horse Happy Knight would finish among the first three: yet he started "favourite". On this negative point, at least, the experts are entitled to applause.

Most notable of all, I have not been able to find in any of my colleagues' interesting surveys a single reference to the horse that won, Airborne. He was nowhere mentioned, so far as I know, as a possible outsider. His "price" was 50-1. He was backed for all sorts of fanciful reasons, by soldiers because of the anniversary of the airborne landing in Normandy, by ladies because his number was 13, by his owner's employees from a very proper sentiment. No one has come forward with the claim that he backed this animal after a careful study of its past and parentage. Not even his owner expected him to win.

Now, it is not as if there was any secrecy about the doings of a Derby horse. Indeed, they have no private life at all. Even their rehearsal gallops are attended, in many cases, by large and interested crowds; and, if any attempt at secrecy be made, cunning spies, as is well known, will lie under bushes with telescopes to ascertain the truth.

As for their public performances, these are watched, weighed, recorded, analysed, compared, discounted, condoned and disinfected with all the solemnity and care of a laboratory research. Few citizens in normal times could remember at the first challenge who was Prime Minister five years ago: but the name of the animal that won the Derby that year will come easily to many millions. In politics we affect to despise the "hereditary principle"; but lest a horse's record in action should have failed to reveal the truth about its powers, we examine tirelessly the deeds of its ancestors and dig down deep to the roots of the genealogical tree.

How, then, I ask myself with some anxiety, is it possible for any animal to win the Derby at 50 or 60 to 1? How is it that our elaborate searchlight of record and reason can fail to reveal a horse capable of winning a notoriously testing race and defeating with ease six or seven well-known and well-respected competitors? "There are no outsiders with qualifications", said the most learned and lucid of my colleagues firmly; and, after the event, he wrote, "It is certain that Airborne has been backward all through and is a good colt for the first time now." "A good colt for the first time now." Yes, but, with respect, dear colleague, an animal does not suddenly acquire the speed and stamina of a Derby winner between breakfast and luncheon on the first Wednesday in June. Presumably he had had occasional gallops during his training. Where were the men with telescopes under bushes? And what about his ancestry?

"There was nothing in the form of Airborne", says another colleague in a Sunday sheet, "to suggest ability within a stone of the favourites, his only previous success having been in a small maiden stakes for three-year-olds only three weeks previously..."

A horse can hardly do more than win: and it was that win that caused his appearance in the Derby. My colleagues, however, were not impressed.

"Not only was his form against him," says the same Sunday scribe, "but experts would not look at him twice on account of his breeding (on

the dam's side) and conformation. His dam Bouquet was a very moderate performer..."

Then comes this disturbing passage: "But the experts had forgotten that Airborne's maternal grandsire was Buchan (second in the Derby) who was a son of Sunstar, a Derby winner. On the sire's side Airborne is full of the best staying blood, the tall male line reading Precipitation, Hurry On, Marcovil, Marco, Barcaldine."

The horse, it is true, had won one race only: but he had won it three weeks before the Derby. As for breeding, the article from which I have just quoted is headed:

AIRBORNE WAS BRED ON CLASSIC LINES

I was so much struck by the learning and wisdom of this writer that I dug out of the basket the same paper of the Sunday before the Derby to see what he said then. He was all for Gulf Stream: so he was wiser than most. But he does not make any reference to the actual winner of the Derby, though "bred on classic lines".

I do not wish to embarrass my colleagues unduly: but clearly there is a major charge of inefficiency here, and it is not enough for us to go on cheerfully selling our predictions every day as if nothing had happened. The public confidence is shaken. In the normal course Sir Stafford Cripps of the Board of Trade would appoint a "working-party" to suggest improvements in our performance; or Mr. Herbert Morrison would announce that we are on the nationalization list.

But there are peculiar features of our profession which may well give His Majesty's Ministers pause. A Government, it seems, can fail with food-gambles for a long time without shaking many of its faithful supporters. But a Government which gave a series of "losers", a Government which allowed a 50-1 chance to win the Derby, and then announced that all the time they knew it had been "bred on classic lines", would not have much fun at the by-elections: and Ministers may conclude that the science of horse-prediction is still so immature that such errors are inevitable.

I cannot tell what is for the best. But, while these high questions of policy are under debate, I do suggest to my colleagues that they had much better do as Captain Haddock does and use the stars. Through an administrative error his Derby prediction was not printed in any paper: but the stars did give, "actually":

1. Airborne
2. Gulf Stream
3. Radiotherapy. A. P. H.

o o

Modified for India

"HIT PARADE OF 1945"

A Great Musical extra Vaganza,"
Screen advt. in an Indian cinema.

o o

"All the early-morning workers managed to get to work to time, even if many of them were a little late."—S. Wales paper.

And that takes some doing.



American Commentary

GOOD evening. Some of you may have noticed that this week Congress has been showing a most uncongressional conciliatoriness towards the President's handling of the predigested popcorn situation. Over here, popcorn rates as a major governmental headache, and down in the popcorn belt the boys have been mailing their congressmen that they had better fix a limit to the presidential policy of price-ceiling revision and fix it good. Only last week Senator Brickenbacker of Hideho went on record to the effect that one more crack like that last one of the President's about ground-hogs and he for one would take the farmer-labour ticket at the next election. To-night, opinion is that Senator Brickenbacker could take the coca-cola ticket without the President losing any sleep; but my guess is that the President doesn't get much sleep anyway. I mention this merely to underscore the very considerable unusualness of this change of mood on the part of Congress; and to point out too that this is just one of the unpredictable ways in which the political climate down in Washington is liable to change when nobody is looking; or, rather, I should say when nobody except the President is looking, because the President is looking that way most of the time. This will maybe give you some idea how difficult it is to forecast what the position is liable to be next fall, when John C. McGurkinshaw has threatened to move into the bituminous coalfields unless the Little Steel formula is lifted off soft coal. I should remind you that it is a major matter of principle with the administration to leave the Little Steel formula right where it is; which makes it anybody's guess what is going to happen to Little Steel or to John C. McGurkinshaw or to soft coal. Right now a Stop-McGurkinshaw movement is perceptibly taking shape in Congress, where Representatives Fretsaw, Mudbright and Jefferson Hake have stated their readiness to go to the Supreme Court if necessary, and stay there; and several of their colleagues are known to be sympathetic to this move. It may look to you as if at this rate the President were shaping up for another spell of pump-priming in order to side-track the short-term overspill from the liquid soap industry without committing himself to a long-term anti-inflationary show-down with labour; but it is not quite as simple as that. For one thing, nobody is going to sit

back and let the bottom fall out of the reconversion programme because the administration wants to shore up the price-structure by scraping the bottom of the man-power barrel, least of all Senator Brickenbacker; and you can be quite sure that if the President is forced to reverse himself on this he will not do it with the Senator around. This is probably the underlying reason for the plainly-worded statement Secretary Birdseed is reported to have made to the Amalgamated Brotherhood of All-In Wrestlers at Rattlesnake, Sultana, in which he gave notice that the administration has no intention of stockpiling any appreciable backlog of federal purchasing-power against a possible recessive trend in price-levels, even assuming that the hard money interests try, as is now fully possible, to steam-roller the findings of the Clambake Committee on Save-Spend. This can be interpreted as meaning that the administration intends to stand pat by the letter of the Jugson Act and crack down on any attempt to create further bottlenecks by rocking the boat. Now when I remind you that, as of this moment, the words Jugson Act are pretty nearly fighting words in any state south of the Usquebackwash River, you can probably figure out what effect this news is going to have on the average share-cropper and stock-breeder in, say, Hopscotch, Kedgere; and for that matter so can Senator Brickenbacker. In fact when the ordinary man gets around to saying what he thinks about all this we can expect a sharp upward movement of the federal man-power-efficiency index, which will almost certainly be followed by a steep downward movement on Wall Street by heavy industrials, and possibly even a brisk sideways movement up Seventh Avenue by Senator Brickenbacker. If this catches the President unawares—which is more unlikely than I can say—it is going to mean lifting the dead-freight limit off inter-state transportation, putting the Jugson Act back into cold storage, and maybe throwing John C. McGurkinshaw out of the bituminous coalfields. Meanwhile, a sizeable ground-swell of anti-administration feeling is sweeping up from the cracked-corn areas of the South-West towards the stuffed-shirt districts of the North-East; the Senate has clamped a cast-iron ceiling on real estate; and the President is having a blast-proof safety-clause inserted into the Slugwell Act and

leaving for a long vacation at Gumboil Rapids. All of which adds up to a considerable likelihood that there will be plenty more to talk about in next week's American Commentary. Good night.

Short Notice

IT is with pleasure that we notice that the first post-war Summer Exhibition has recently opened at Messrs. Warp and Woof, The Esplanade Galleries, Seabeach.

The exhibits once again fall sharply into two schools, one half deriving from the traditional genius of Tuck and Valentine, and the other half comprising the more ebullient work of an artist whose signature we have unfortunately never been able to decipher.

The former school keeps rigidly to its familiar lines, and opinion is divided as to which is the most striking of the current offerings. "The Municipal Bathing Pool" (No. 42, New Series), is tackled boldly and with much sympathy, while "Rocks, West Bay" (No. 55) makes a remarkable symbolical study leading us to expect much from this exhibitor next year. Is it too much to hope that he may be prevailed upon to give us his interpretation of the new Victory Bandstand, a subject full of rich possibilities?

An interesting pair of studies are "The Lighthouse, Looking South," and "The Lighthouse, Looking North." In the former work there is a seagull perched on top of the lighthouse, while in the latter the seagull has gone. It is contended by several local critics that the bird adds to the composition, but it seems to me that its presence detracts from the austere unity of the central theme so evident in "The Lighthouse, Looking North." Possibly neither is quite so perfect in form as that masterpiece of 1937, "The Lighthouse, Looking West."

There are two pleasant if unoriginal landscapes, "The Golf Links" (No. 9) and "Victoria Gardens: The Putting Green" (No. 23, New Series), both of which are by the same hand.

"The Municipal Gasworks," though ably executed in sepia tones, is marred, one feels, by a somewhat unrewarding choice of subject. In the opinion of one visitor at least this treatment would have been more felicitously applied to the Floral Hall or the General Post Office.

In "The Pier" (No. 19, New Series), the exhibitor seems to have something to say, but his message is not clear, while in the bold use of colour "The

"Esplanade Gardens" commands our interest. One cannot leave this section without noting "Esplanade: General View" (No. 24). This is reminiscent of the crowded canvases of Frith, and the pre-Raphaelite detail of the ice-cream cornet in the hand of the small boy in the bottom right-hand corner will not be overlooked by the connoisseur.

Turning to the other half of the collection, one is again impressed by the virile optimism and the powerful thought content of this fertile artist. In an age when depressing introversion is so unfortunately common it is refreshing to find work which states its meaning so clearly and with such continuing faith in the indomitable spirit of humanity.

The stout lady who has inspired so many of this artist's best pieces is again prominent. An arresting and unusual study is one of this lady, viewed from behind, stooping to tie a shoe-lace (No. 38, "Always Plenty to See at Seabeach"), while the same lady,

mounted astride a donkey, typifies the irresistible onswEEP of the popular will.

The same artist includes a couple of notable nudes ("Seeing the Sights at Seabeach" and "Sorry—No Coupons!"), which were drawing a good deal of well-merited attention.

It is pleasing to be able to add that there is every prospect of this exhibition, unlike many less fortunate, being a pronounced commercial success, and many of the studies have already brought good prices.

We have made no mention of four pieces, "Cleopatra's Needle," "Westminster Abbey," "Trafalgar Square," and "Buckingham Palace." We understand that these were delivered at the Esplanade Galleries in error and are shortly to be withdrawn.

Impending Apology

"CAN CIVILIZATION SURVIVE
WITH A. M. PALMER, M.P.,
IN THE CHAIR."

Handbill.

The Enigma Variations

IS it too late for me to learn the flute?

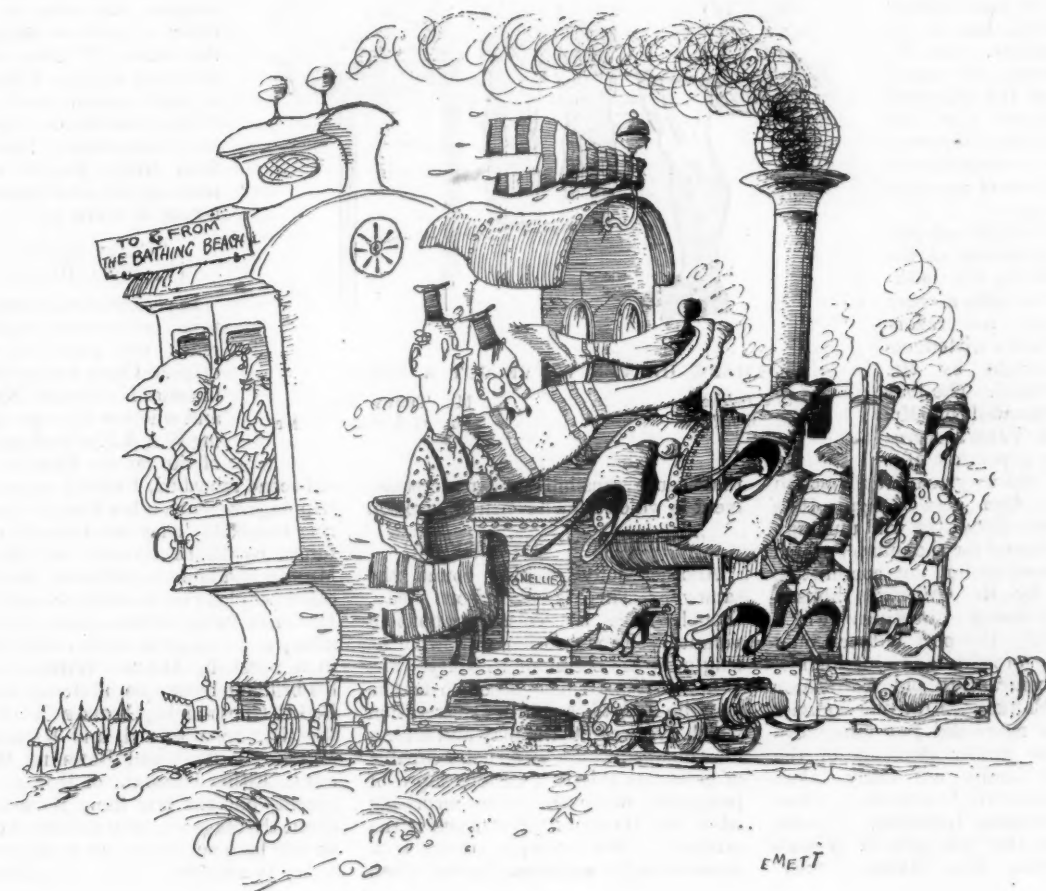
Should I be simply Tops
on the stops,
or absolute Flops?

I mean, have I the blow
to get higher than "doh"?
I don't know!

Could I master the keys
enough to play "Trees"?
Tell me, please,

if you could do it,
would you buy a flu-it,
or passe-partout it?

Is it too late? The point is incredibly moot. V. G.



At the Play

"THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV"
(LYRIC, HAMMERSMITH)

To stage a Russian novel is like trying to tell an Eskimo about relativity in five minutes, the Eskimo being the member of the audience who hasn't read the novel. It is a tussle between quantity and quality. Any attempt to convey the vast scope of the scene is likely to be made at the expense of atmosphere, and this is where Mr. ALEC GUINNESS has been clever. He has not achieved the nearly impossible and made a good coherent play, but he has succeeded in isolating authentic slabs of that elusive Russian essence of inspired despondency. To do this he has had to seal it off in separate compartments, so that we get a series of episodes which, though they tell a story, tell one which is incompletely Dostoevsky's; but to do it at all is a feat. And Mr. PETER BROOK, the young producer of the Stratford *Love's Labour's Lost*, has seized on the flexible nature of the piece to obtain some exciting effects of grouping and lighting.

Smerdyakov, the epileptic steward, steps out of his part to fill in the background for us with a crazy commentary, his razor-sharp half-wittedness adroitly caught by Mr. JAMES DONALD. The first act is dominated by Mr. FREDERICK VALK's *Karamazov père*, a portrait of a monstrous old satyr such as Hogarth would have been glad to sign. It is tremendous. *Mitya*, the wild unhappy youth sentenced for the murder which he has aimed at but not committed, is played by Mr. GUINNESS himself with a burning directness which over-simplifies the part but certainly makes it forceful and intelligible. In vivid contrast to old *Karamazov* is Mr. ERNEST MILTON's *Father Zossima*, a mannered but impressive saint. The milder elements of the *Karamazov* family are fairly taken by Mr. RAYMOND JAQUARELLO, *Ivan*, and Mr. PIERRE LEFEVRE, *Alyosha*, and so are the two girls in *Mitya's* life—*Katerina*, Miss HAZEL TERRY,

and *Grushenka*, Miss ELIZABETH SELLARS. Miss VERONICA TURLEIGH strikes a welcome comic note as the flighty *Madame Hohlakov*.

The best scenes are the family quarrel in the *Karamazov* dining-room, the death of *Father Zossima* surrounded by his disciples, and *Ivan's* nightmare in which he is visited by the ghost of *Smerdyakov*, but nothing in the whole evening more clearly demonstrates Mr. BROOK's sureness of touch than the brief moment of *Mitya's* farewell to *Grushenka*. It has



THANK HEAVEN WE'VE GOT A NAVY!

Captain Belcher MR. TEDDY KNOX
General Woodcock MR. HUMPHREY KENT

that acute sensibility of understatement in which a few French films excel.

"REDEMPTION" (WIMBLEDON)

Another jolly evening round the samovar. This is a tedious play, though it is by Tolstoy, about a voluntary Enoch Arden wallowing at length in an ocean of self-pity. Mr. DONALD WOLFIT has chosen to act the maudlin *Fedya* in a vein of exaggeration which overweights the play and underlines its weaknesses. In an actor capable of greatness this is a curious lapse of judgment, made the more surprising when Mr. HARCOURT WILLIAMS is the producer. For example, there is a moment in the magistrate's office when

Fedya, confronted by his unfortunate wife, parts from her before going out to shoot himself (with the utmost publicity); it should have touched one, but Mr. WOLFIT went down on his knees in such an ecstasy of self-abasement that it only rather shocked.

Fedya is a young man of promise who leaves home for the bottle and the gipsies. Having given him every chance, his virtuous wife decides to marry her admirer, but is stymied by *Fedya's* moral scruples about divorce (he is bulging with moral scruples in everything except the wrecking of other people's lives). He has a shot at suicide, butfunking it, arranges a faked drowning and then fades into the underworld, where careless talk in a pub at length brings the affair disastrously to the ears of the police. How long the underworld has to put up with him is a nice matter for speculation, for he himself goes slightly grey and his infant son attains bouncing stature, but none of the other characters seems a day older. Whatever way you look at him *Fedya* is a poor creature and Mr. WOLFIT would do well to leave him alone. There is some lively Magyar skirmishing, but as a whole the acting is below par.

"CRAZY SHOW"
(VICTORIA PALACE)

In perfection of imbecility this programme doesn't reach the peaks of the original Crazy Gang, but it includes NERVO and KNOX, and whether they are drilling W.A.A.F. or making hay of life on the Frontier (an old scene rehearsed, I think) or merely tripping over each other's feet they still ring the bell. They are bravely reinforced by BILLY CARYLL and HILDA MUNDY in domestic infelicities, and the other people of their inverted world are DOUGLAS BYNG, whose one-man pantomime is a complete work of criticism in a nutshell, ALBERT WHELAN and his brilliant burlesque of Henry Hall's B.B.C. Guest-night, GEORGE CALIENTA the tight-rope wizard, and RANDALL, MELINO, HOLLIS and BARBARA RANDALL. Either RANDALL or HOLLIS was absent, but the trio flung themselves about the stage in a way which it would be idle for you, reader, or even for me to try to emulate. ERIC.

At the Opera

NEW PRODUCTIONS AT SADLER'S WELLS

THE Sadler's Wells Opera Company have two outstanding new productions to their credit this season. One is **ERMANNO WOLF-FERRARI's** *I Quattro Rusteghi* in an English version called *School for Fathers*, by **E. J. DENT**, and the other is **VAUGHAN WILLIAMS's** *Sir John in Love*, based on Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

It is to the persistence of Professor **DENT** as well as the enterprise of Sadler's Wells that we owe the production of *I Quattro Rusteghi*, which has not been heard in England before. Having heard it one can well understand his enthusiasm, for it is a first-rate comic opera in the eighteenth-century Italian tradition. Its melodies ripple and sparkle like those of Pergolesi, while the orchestration is full of colour and of all kinds of humorous and descriptive quirks that give the whole a slightly ironic and wholly enchanting artificiality. The story, from a Venetian comedy by Goldoni, is about a youthful couple, *Lucinda* and *Peter*. Their marriage has been arranged by their tyrannical fathers, who decree that they shall not see each other until their wedding-day. These pleasant specimens of parenthood, called in the English version *Crusty* and *Hardstone*, with their two equally gallant friends, *Gruff* and *Pinchbeck*, are the Four Boors (*rusteghi*) who hold that the duty of women is to be seen and to obey, but never to be heard or to argue. The outrageous treatment of the young couple causes the wives of the *rusteghi* to rise in revolt against their insufferable husbands. They contrive a secret meeting of the young couple, who fall madly in love at first sight, and in the end the *quattro rusteghi* are forced to admit that it is better to accept a wife for what she is than to beat her and bully her for not being what she isn't.

It would have been better not to change the setting, as **DENNIS ARUNDELL** has done, from the Venice of 1800 to the London of 1750. The charm of comic opera of this kind is its artificiality, and this quality and the effect of **WOLF-FERRARI's** witty and sophisticated score are alike blunted by the prosaic settings and boisterous acting which at times descends to low comedy. Why should the hero be turned into an idiot of the type played by Ralph Lynn? And the by-play with a pair of corsets is the kind of humour—if it is humour—that springs not from

eighteenth-century manners but from Victorian prudery. Again, Protestant London has no carnival-time, for which the heroine sighs; and "How long, O Lord, how long?" is not in keeping with the character of an innocent young girl praying for romance. With this rather large reservation the cast acquit themselves very well. **ROSE HILL** is a charming heroine, and **NORA GRUHN's** tirade addressed to the ill-conditioned *rusteghi* is quite a *tour de force*. **HOWELL GLYNNE** is as bearish and boorish a husband and father as ever deserved a clout on the ear.

The boisterousness that is so much out of place in *School for Fathers* is just right for *Sir John in Love*. *The Merry Wives* comes as near to being forced as any product of Shakespeare's genius could ever be, and all that follows *Falstaff's* muddy bath in the Thames after his escape in the linen-basket is a creaking anti-climax, but when wedded to the genius of a **VAUGHAN WILLIAMS** (pace the purists) an indifferent play makes a splendid opera. What a feast of good things it is—its wonderful tunes, which have their roots as deep in the soil of England as her oak-trees; its yeoman full-bloodedness; its rich characterization. Here surely is one of the classics

of English opera. The production at the Wells is effective and the cast give a good performance. **LEYLAND WHITE's** *Falstaff* is on rather too small a scale, but the difficulties of the rôle are of course enormous.

PUCCINI's *Il Tabarro* (*The Cloak*) has also been revived this season to make a double bill of *verismo* and blood-letting with *Cavalleria Rusticana*. It is wonderful "theatre," though when all is said and done it is a sordid little tragedy with a repulsive climax—the wronged husband forces his wife's face down beside that of her strangled lover, and then strangles her too. The action takes place on a barge moored at a Paris quayside, with a distant view of Notre Dame seen through a dark archway. The setting and production enhance the sense of impending doom with which **PUCCINI** has invested his masterly score, but when we heard this opera the culminating horror of the death by strangulation of the guilty pair was submerged in the tragedy that overtook the entire cast, all of whom were drowned—by the orchestra. They mouthed and gesticulated, as well they might, but their cries for help went unheard. The principals were **VICTORIA SLADEN**, **RODERICK JONES** and **FRANK SALE**.
D. C. B.



"In the play he said '—!' and in the book he said '*****!!'"



"You'll find it less confusing if you remember that the 'in' tray has a bit of red cotton tied to it."

Our Booking-Office

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

English Architecture—its Masters and Victims

A BUILDING expresses—or should express—the mind of the builder; and something "over-scientific and indigestible" in contemporary architecture leads Mr. RALPH TUBBS to the sound conclusion that the same conditions that are necessary for the rebirth of society are necessary for the rebirth of architecture. Yet he is characteristically positive that nothing good comes of going back to where you took the wrong turning, though most reformations have begun in this simple and obvious fashion. It is a pity, too, that the author of *The Englishman Builds* (PENGUIN BOOKS, 3/6) shows little appreciation—apart from stone and timber—of the Middle Ages. Yet the span between, say, St. Anselm and Dick Whittington was the age that most successfully integrated the highest reaches of the human spirit with its humblest manifestations. There are very few things actually needed for the good life; and one would like to see Mr. TUBBS writing another and larger book, just as professionally knowledgeable and enthusiastic as this one, with a hearth and an altar for its foundation-stones. One could then proceed to assess the manifestations of good taste and bad taste, functionalism and décor, and all the other conflicting urgencies which the present summary and its profusion of photographs exposes, with some sort of criterion.

H. P. E.

A Fenian Romance

The word "boycott" is derived from a Captain Cunningham Boycott, a land agent of Lord Erne. In the struggle, round about 1880, between the English Government and the National Land League, founded by Parnell and Michael

Davitt, the Land League decided to isolate Captain Boycott by forbidding the local Irish to have anything to do with him, either socially or in the way of business; and this method was subsequently applied to other agents of the land-owning class. In *Land* (GOLLANCZ, 9/-) Mr. LIAM O'FLAHERTY has constructed an exciting romance round this incident. Raoul St. George, the head of a very old but decayed Irish house, returns from Paris to the remains of the ancestral estate in County Mayo. He is accompanied by his daughter, Lettice, an ardent and beautiful girl, who falls passionately in love with Michael O'Dwyer, the youthful leader of the local Fenians. Influenced partly by his daughter's enthusiasm, partly by a desire to make something of his hitherto idle and dilettante existence, and partly by his disgust with the brutal English overlord of the district, Captain Butcher, Raoul St. George joins the popular movement, and invents the weapon historically associated with the name of Captain Boycott. The story is excellently worked out, with plenty of thrilling incidents which culminate in the deaths of Captain Butcher and Michael O'Dwyer. Love in its poetic form is embodied in Lettice; in its more intoxicating aspects in the tawny-complexioned wife of Captain Butcher.

H. K.

Poet's Pride

Pride takes different forms with different poets. As the Lancashire connoisseur said, there is "reet" pride and mucky pride; and Mr. WILLIAM KEAN SEYMOUR's falls into the happier category. He feels, like the onlie begetter of the Sonnets, that he has done a poet's job when some precious fragment of otherwise fugitive experience has been seized and sung. The song may or may not be immortal; but at least you can sing it again yourself, and other people—if they like—can sing it too. This outlook and its lyrical, descriptive and (more rarely) satirical embodiments are the making of Mr. SEYMOUR's *Collected Poems* (HALE, 8/6). They range over thirty years of the writer's life, and rely mainly on those sterling English techniques whose gold can be reminted, again and again, and still display all the nuances of the new mould. His experiments, like everyone else's, can be cowardly or temerarious. "Earth-bore" is an unhelpful substitute for "tunnel," and "When you are old" a too flagrant challenge to Ronsard and Yeats. But in "Alpine Annunciation," in "Weeding," in "Battersea Park," in "Summer Pastoral," in "James K. Jallofat," in "In the Train" and in "Carnations" he is himself at his best; and how many-sided that best is you can deduce from these titles.

H. P. E.

Back to the Past

The loved and familiar names of E. CE. SOMERVILLE and MARTIN ROSS on the cover of a book, *Happy Days* (LONGMANS, 10/6), bring sorrow because the partnership is ended and the days we knew are over, but they bring joy, too, because in these "Essays of Sorts" (the description is Dr. SOMERVILLE's) we can go back to the past, enjoy leisure and prosperity and revel in our faint sense of guilt. All the essays are reprinted from journals and magazines and deal with horses, dogs, "period aunts" (how dear and brave and fierce these are), journeys in Spain, France and Italy, a day with the Quorn and delights of many kinds. The best of them all tells us a little about the famous American horse-tamer, John S. Rarey, mentioned in *Punch* in 1858 and sketched by John Leech. The author discovered him when her elders, believing children should be seen and not heard, would "snatch one of these priceless volumes from its place and, flinging it on the floor of the

old library, would say, "There! Look at *Punch* and hold your tongue!" Later she collected facts about him and his gift as a "whisperer" and the story she has made of his taming of Lord Dorchester's horse, Cruiser, is magnificent. It is tantalizing, too, because one longs to know so much more than she was able to find out. There is another enchanting essay on the "little personal dogs" (fox-terriers) with the "silvery tinkling yawn, that is a hint that patience is exhausted, and the warbling groan that can express any emotion from love to hunger." One could quote for a long time, but there is only space left for thanks.

B. E. B.

Russian America

A concise and lucid account of the period when Alaska belonged to Russia would be of interest and value. The Russian explorer, Bering, discovered Alaska in 1741, and in the following half-century merchants from Siberia established a trade in furs with the native Indians. In 1799 a Russian-American Company was founded, in imitation of the British East India Company. Its objects were to regularize trade and to expand Russian influence on the American continent; and in the second quarter of the nineteenth century it even aimed at acquiring California. But St. Petersburg did not back the schemes of Baron von Wrangell, the director on the spot; the Russian hold on Alaska itself dwindled, and in 1867 the United States purchased Alaska from Russia. In *Lord of Alaska: Baranov and the Russian Adventure* (ROBERT HALE, 12/6), Mr. HECTOR CHEVIGNY gives, in the form of a fictional biography, an account of Alexander Baranov, the first director of the Russian-American Company. Washington Irving described Baranov as "a rough, rugged, hard-drinking old Russian; somewhat of a soldier, somewhat of a trader . . . with a strong cross of the bear." There are the materials of a good book in Mr. CHEVIGNY's story of this tough adventurer, with his mixture of guile and simplicity, who was always in trouble of some kind, with the natives, with his subordinates and with the Russian missionaries who had followed in his wake. But Mr. CHEVIGNY's narrative, flowery and over-dramatized, blurs a vivid and in places even moving story.

H. K.

For the Gunroom Shelf

Scientific progress seems about to reach one of its major crazy moments when a fighter pilot will be able to pull away from the shots of a distant enemy, for the .303 bullet, which leaves the muzzle at 1,663 m.p.h. slows down after a thousand yards to just below 700 m.p.h., a speed already within sight by jet aircraft. This curious reflection is prompted by reading *The Englishman and the Rifle* (JENKINS, 12/6), an interesting survey by Colonel Lord COTTESLOE, who has made a lifelong study of shooting. The development of breech-loading in the nineteenth century gave our use of the rifle new impetus, and he shows how a steady improvement in ammunition reduced calibres from the enormous .710 Minié carried in the Crimea to the .303, the beautiful little .256 Mannlicher with which some experts tackle big game, and the deadly accurate .22. He gives just praise to the National Rifle Association for its admirable work since the day when Queen Victoria opened its first meeting at Wimbledon in 1860 by scoring a gratifying bull with a Whitworth held in a rest; and, convinced that the rifle is still a basic weapon of defence in spite of the atom bomb, hopes the Government will not empty its armouries, as it did after the last war, and may even be induced to revoke the present stifling restrictions on the .22. Lord COTTESLOE writes

modestly (he captained England) and well. There are excellent accounts of the sober but special excitements of the classic meetings, and chapters on stalking and sniping. The book is a mine of information in which old shots will find delight and young ones much good advice.

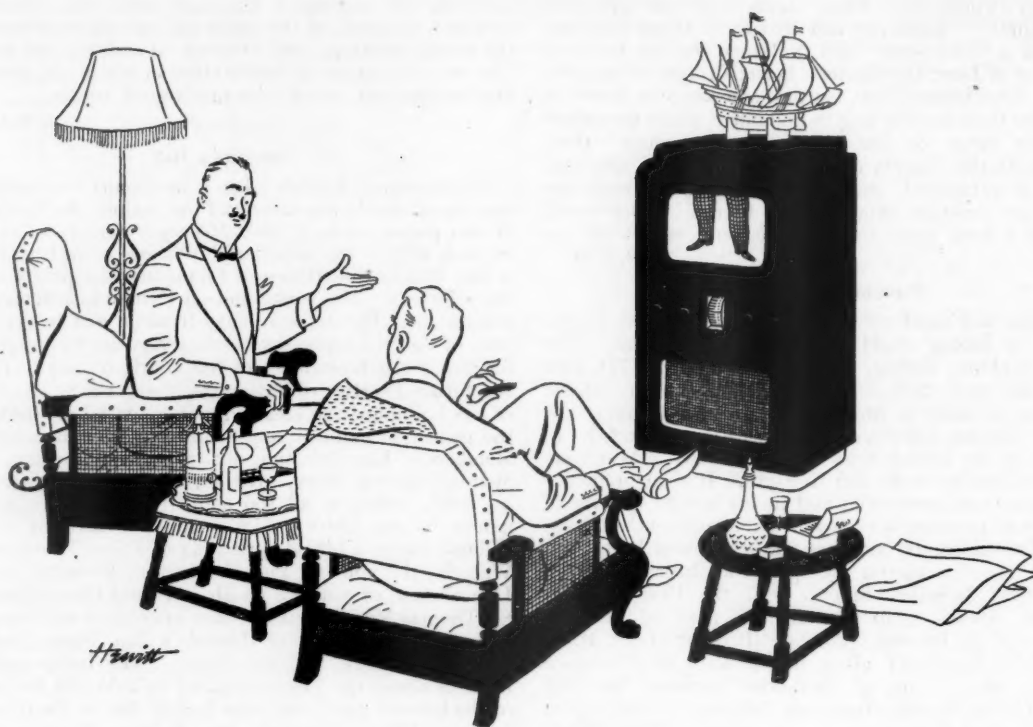
E. O. D. K.

Lincoln's Inn

The history of Lincoln's Inn is personally interesting but also significant in the history of the nation. As Sir GERALD HURST points out in *A Short History of Lincoln's Inn* (CONSTABLE, 12/6), "The impersonal influence of an Inn of Court is like that of the House of Commons, the public school, the regiment. Men come and go. These historic societies remain . . . The extraordinary freedom and power of the Inns of Court, largely governed as they are by judges, also fortifies the independence of the Courts of Law, on which the future liberties of Britain may depend." The beauty of the buildings, the creation of Lincoln's Inn Fields, and the galaxy of eminent men who have been Benchers and Members of Lincoln's Inn, not to mention the first female Member, Queen Mary, give the author fine material for his book, which is all too short. Some of the greatest names in our history adorn the Inn—Edward Gibbon, William Penn, a liberal sprinkling of Prime Ministers, e.g., Walpole, the younger Pitt, Addington, Perceval, Asquith, Disraeli, and of course a number of Lord Chancellors from Sir Thomas More onwards. The lawyers at any rate have preserved the beauty of Lincoln's Inn, Stone Buildings and New Square, and the Fields. The battle with the builders about the Fields occurred in 1656 and the success of the lawyers may have been largely due to the friendship between Oliver Cromwell and William Prynne, not to mention Oliver St. John, who defended John Hampden in the Shipmoney case in 1637. The book is a remarkable summary of great achievement.

E. S. P. H.





"I told you so, the aerial isn't high enough."

A Sculptor's Tale

WHEN I was barely out of my teens I threw off a group of athletes in Spanish mahogany which so impressed one of the leading sculptors of the day that he predicted a brilliant career for me. "You have handled your wood masterfully," he said. "Some years ago I attempted a Dryad in teak, but my material was too knotty. May I ask why you have included among your figures this old man in the bath-chair?"

"It is contrast," I replied. "The youth and energy of the athletes are emphasized by the old man's decrepitude."

I explained that the figures were hollow, with a door in the back of each, and hooks inside, on which coats and hats might be hung. He appeared to be much struck with the idea, and advised me to persevere with my work. "Approach the corporations," he said. "That is where the money is. I am working now on a study of Hercules cleaning the Augean stables, for Bollington Town Hall, and expect it to bring me a good round sum. I have

planned for two stables—the Mayor's Parlour and the ante-chamber. When the door of the parlour is opened, Hercules will be seen peering in with a brush in his hand. By an ingenious mechanism the hand holding the brush may be made to move up and down. I expect the effect to be tremendous."

It was not long before I saw an advertisement asking for the services of a competent sculptor to undertake work for the Tigswell Town Council. I answered it without delay, and soon received a reply asking me to start north immediately. The work was for the newly-built corporation baths, and would consist either of the aldermen, in granite, clustered about the diving-board, or of a figure of Leander coming out of one of the cubicles.

Next day I was speeding northwards, my mind full of my first commission. Of the two works, the Leander appeared the more attractive. The labour involved was not so great, and I could loose my unbridled fancy on the features, confident that a neat

card or plaque would settle all doubts. With the group of aldermen, a close study of each subject was essential, and it appeared to me that there was more likelihood of unfavourable criticism of the finished work.

I was roused from my musings by the voice of the only other occupant of the compartment.

"Can you lend me an indiarubber?" he asked.

"Certainly," I replied, glancing casually at the sketch he was making on the back of an old envelope. "May I ask what is the subject of your drawing?"

"It's a row of bathing-cubicles," he replied.

"And the figure in the foreground?" I queried, my heart sinking.

"It's supposed to be Leander," he answered, looking at me curiously.

"And what is the object at his feet?" I asked angrily.

"A cat," he said. "Leander likes water: cat loathes it. Contrast."

For a moment I was speechless. Here, on the very threshold of my

career, I had encountered not only a rival but one who was master of a device which I had reckoned my own. At last, with a shaking hand, I held out the letter from Tigsweil Town Council. He took it and read it attentively from beginning to end.

"Who were your teachers?" he asked.

I had to admit that I was entirely self-taught, and that my first head had been made out of a brick.

"And does a raw boy," he asked contemptuously, "pit his skill against the hand that created the Priam and Goblin for Hannasford Public Library? I dynamite my outlines, I may tell you. If it comes to the aldermen I fancy I shall finish first!"

I replied quietly that I should do my best, and we sat in silence for the rest of the journey.

At Tigsweil Town Hall it was decided that we might each undertake the work, but that the whole fee should go to the sculptor whose figures were selected by the council. The mayor told us that the majority had at first favoured the group of aldermen, but that after some discussion it had been agreed to include Leander, clapping the senior alderman on the back.

Full of zest, I left the Town Hall, and within half an hour had ordered a supply of granite and rented a room. Unfortunately, my funds limited me to an attic, and I soon found that it was beyond my power to move or house the large blocks necessary for the aldermen. On fire to begin, I impetuously determined to make each figure about three feet high and had my granite cut accordingly. The heads I decided to carve to life-size. By nightfall I was swinging my mallet with a will, though in fact I hardly had space to do so.

During the weeks that followed I saw little of my rival, though we were occasionally brought into contact when we happened to have chosen the same alderman for study. By his tape measure, which he used with serene assurance, I guessed that his figures were to be life-size. I contented myself with a close scrutiny of the features.

I was about half-way through my work, and keeping a little ahead of my rival, thanks to a mishap with his blasting technique which blew the roof off his studio and incapacitated him for several days, when I received an urgent summons from the mayor. He told me that the idea of the aldermen in granite had caused a public outcry and that the plan must be abandoned. He suggested that we should combine our work in a representation of the meeting of Stanley and Livingstone,

for the sheep market, with the two Leanders as the central figures and the aldermen as native bearers, guides and so on.

A moment's thought convinced me that my half-size figures would strike a false note. Curtly rejecting the plan, I refused a season ticket for the baths that the mayor attempted to press upon me, and left the town without more ado.

The Years Between

ANOTHER thing I have learned about writing is that one should never rush blindly into autobiography. Never give all the heart; do it by instalments. Until fairly recently autobiography was widely regarded as the prerogative of ageing writers and politicians, a reward for a lifetime of plot-hunting and fiction-mongering. It was a sort of literary bonus payable only to those with their contributions in order and up-to-date. The assumptions were, of course, that an autobiography should be written round a person's life and that the longer his race had run the more material he had to select from. Autobiography was not always the sign of a misspent youth.

Nowadays things are very different. Autobiography has become a profession like everything else. A writer will take his expected life-span, split it up into aliquot parts and begin his career by concocting his first autobiography. Then he will take on a number of jobs in quick succession in preparation for the second instalment of his memoir.

ON PROSPECTS DREAR

An Entirely New Autobiography
by Ken P. Umlaut

(Second large impression)

"... superb..." Warwickshire Sun
Colston and Harcove, Publishers

This notice (you *must* know the book) will give you some idea of what I mean. There is some excuse for it, I suppose. The war and the atom bomb have made us all reflective and ruminative. We like to go over our past years with a fine comb in search of lasting values, something to hang on to. And in the hands of a skilled autobiographer these combings can become the very fibre of literature.

But he must observe all the rules. If you, dear reader, intend to make autobiography your trade I urge you

to keep a copy of this article and its hints always at your elbow.

1. Use up most of each book with the story of your childhood and parentage. This is the section that most people tend to skip anyway, so keep it long and tedious. Make a list of your childish ailments, divide the total by the number of volumes you expect to write and tackle the first group as clinically as possible.

2. To add depth to these souvenirs bring in accounts of any local parades and processions that may have passed beneath your window. Mention your childish puzzlement at the fuss caused by the relief of Mafeking, the death of Queen Victoria, the Armistice, the Coal Strike, the Annual Horse Show, and so on.

3. Make great play with your earliest literary efforts—the family newspaper you started in the woodshed, the poems in the school mag., and the stuff rejected by *The Times*. Mention the number of the chapter you reached in the first novel of your nonage.

4. Introduce the middle section of each autobiography with the love theme and arrange for the book to open naturally at that page.

5. Your final chapter should touch lightly on recent topics. There should be something about where you were at the time of Munich, how you reacted on September 3rd, 1939, how drunk you got at the General Election and what you think of Bretton Woods.

6. And, finally, cut the thing off sharply with an epigram about nuclear fission.

And now what about training? My own practice has been to fit in at least five jobs between each autobiography I write. Anything less is rather unimpressive. But some jobs carry much more literary weight than others and I strongly recommend:

A few months with some good broadcasting corporation (say the B.B.C.); a few months (or years) out of work; a spell as temporary civil servant or as public relations officer; a war-time job of some sort; and a humble interlude—van-driving, editing, professional boxing, etc.

One more thing. Study new autobiographies very carefully. There's one due out shortly that will deal with my six months from January to June, 1945; a companion volume for July–December will follow almost immediately. Hod.

Exclusive

"Thatched, quiet, comfortable. Own eggs, vegetables, fruit. Few guests welcome. 4 gns weekly."—Guest-house advt.

Carry Your Bag?

I TOOK the Indian Army Order in to the Adjutant.
"I do not understand this," I said.

"It's quite simple, Tumpin. Your baggage falls into three categories—CABIN, NOT WANTED ON VOYAGE and UNACCOMPANIED—"

"I didn't know there were any unaccompanied baggages in India," I said heavily.

He wrote "112" mechanically on his pad. "I work for Mass Observation," he said. "I'm counting that joke. Now, UNACCOMPANIED you can send from here; stuff which is not wanted—"

"—on the voyage?"

"—and for about six months after. And stuff you don't mind being dropped from a height of forty feet. NOT WANTED ON VOYAGE, as its name implies, is the stuff you want to have with you on the boat."

"I get it. To fool the Customs. We put all our rubies and silk and grapefruit in a box and then write this NOT WANTED on it rather carelessly, as though it contained old boots."

"Mass Observation will be pleased," said the Adjutant; "that is new. No, it goes on the same boat with you, but the point is you can't get at it. It goes in the hold. It will be dropped from forty feet too, but you will be able to see them do it."

"And CABIN I take in my cabin?"

"Only you won't get a cabin, unless you are made a lieutenant-colonel within four days."

I wasn't, so I didn't. I found when I got to Deolali with the rest of Group 26, which seemed to consist

entirely of Artillery survey officers, that we were to travel "standee." There were two schools of thought about this. Some said it meant we would have to stand all the way, and the purists said a standee was obviously a person who is stood on.

It turned out to be a bit of both. The Verandah Café for a hundred passengers had been turned into a dormitory for five hundred officers. There was only one door, and the way from it to the dispersal point led past my bunk. These six hundred surveyors would wait until I was tying my shoe-laces or getting something out of a box and then they would all go to have a shave and I would have to stand up to let them pass. I had to have my box on the floor because I had been about the seven-hundredth to get in and there was no room left on the racks.

In the Red Sea those of us who lived on the main road to the door conceived a violent hatred of the five hundred officers who, it was rumoured, were embarking at Port Said. There were about thirty empty bunks in a sort of cul-de-sac away from the door and miraculously free from vast suit-cases and surveyors (average-sized surveyors of course), but as soon as we moved over to them, pretty high circles began to talk about these people at Port Said, and when we said, "Well, if we are in the bunks when they get on they will never know, and anyway it's seven days shorter for them," mention was made of the Purser's List, as if that settled it, and we had to move back again.

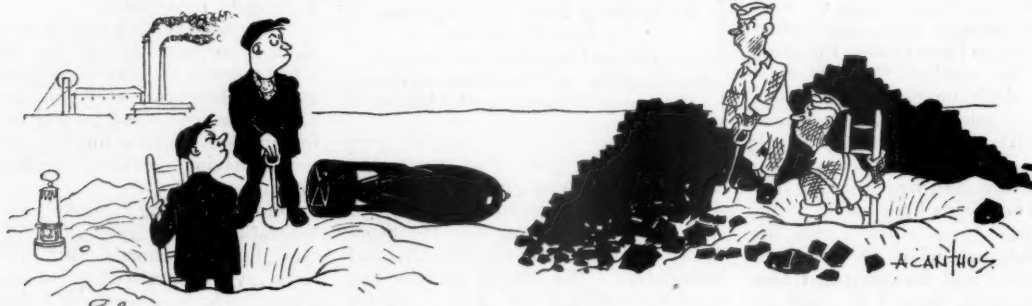
The curious thing was that the

people at Port Said (Good heavens, more surveyors!) weren't put there either. They were given bunks that were already full with kit. They used to put all this kit in the gangway when they were sleeping and put it back when they got up: so the extraordinary people, whom one always meets in the Army, who get up at 4 A.M. and take three-quarters of an hour to shave, couldn't get through except by climbing over all this kit or, as sometimes took their fancy, over my bunk. And then there was somebody's wife who used to stand outside the door at six every morning and shout in a voice of brass "Davie THO-mas! Davie THO-mas! Rise and shine!"

Myself, I stuck pretty religiously to the order which said one should only take as CABIN baggage what one could carry down the gangway oneself. I had not seen that I was going to travel with a thousand professional weight-lifters. I would have given a lot to see the disembarkation of the man who had three large full suit-cases, a tin box, an overcoat, and a pouffe and another suit-case which he had bought over the side at Port Said. (The Egyptians think the British have a mania for leather goods. Perhaps they are right).

Unfortunately, however, these surveyors were all together in drafts: possibly—indeed probably, to judge from all the reminiscences of old Fred and old Morgan—they all came from the same place and all worked on some vast town council. I was in the draft of five people left over, and we got off all by ourselves.

At 2 A.M.



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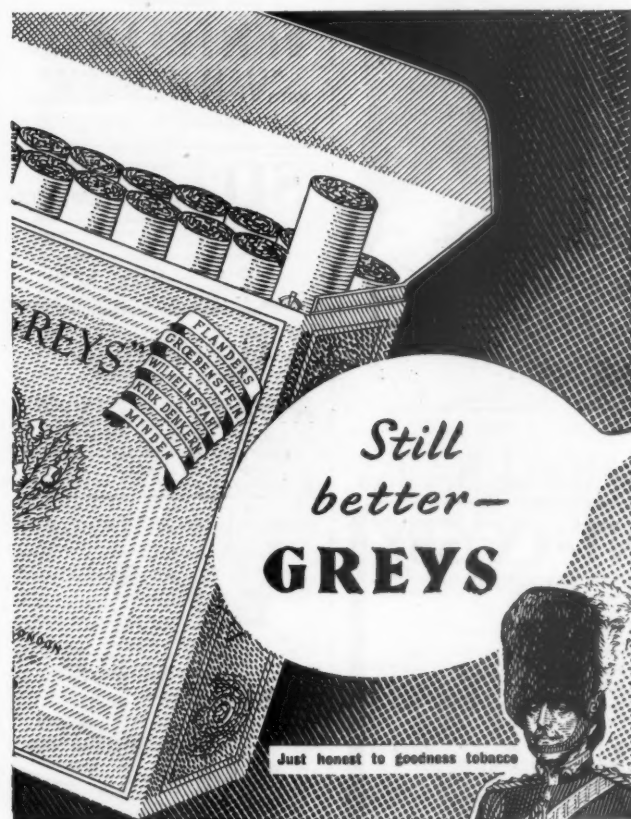
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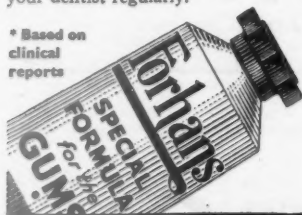


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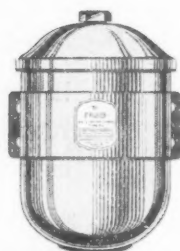
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